

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A device for use in dressing a piece of shellfish, comprising:

a handle portion having a first handle member and a second handle member movable relative thereto between at least first and second positions; and

a working ~~end~~ portion having a first end coupled to the handle portion and terminating at an opposing second end in an insertion tip sized and shaped to be insertable into the piece of shellfish, the working portion having first and second blades, each blade having opposing proximal and distal ends and a central portion therebetween, the proximal ends of the blades being coupled to the first and second handle members, respectively, the first and second blades being coupled to each other distally with respect to the central portion of the blades, the blades being adapted such that their central portions are movable laterally in response to movement of the handle members; and wherein

the first and second blades are operable through manipulation of the handle members to move between an aligned configuration in which the first and second blades are at least substantially aligned with each other to facilitate insertion of the insertion tip into the piece of shellfish, and a spread configuration in which the central portion of at least one of the blades is spaced apart laterally from the central portion of the other blade.

2. (Original) The device of claim 1, further comprising a biasing member configured to urge the second handle member into the first position.

3. (Original) The device of claim 1 wherein the first and second blades are coupled together at locations proximate their distal ends.

4. (Original) The device of claim 1 wherein the first and second blades are pivotally coupled to each other.

5. (Original) The device of claim 1 wherein the blades are in the aligned configuration when the second handle member is in the first position and the blades are in the spread configuration when the second handle member is in the second position.

6. (Original) The device of claim 1 wherein the blades are fixedly coupled with respect to the handle members, respectively, to move therewith as a unit.

7. (Original) The device of claim 1 wherein the handle members are pivotally coupled to each other.

8. (Original) The device of claim 1 wherein at least one of the blades is bifurcated at a pivotal linkage located at least near the central portion of the blade whereby the proximal portion of the blade can pivot with respect to the distal portion of the blade to move between the aligned and spread configurations.

9. (Original) The device of claim 1 wherein the blades are bifurcated at a pivotal linkage located at least near the central portions of the blades whereby the proximal portions of the blades can pivot with respect to the distal portions of the blades to move between the aligned and spread configurations.

10. (Original) The device of claim 1 wherein the blades are bifurcated at a pivotal linkage located at least near the central portions of the blades whereby the proximal portions of the blades can pivot with respect to the distal portions of the blades to move between the aligned and spread configurations, and wherein the first blade is configured to pivot in a direction opposite to the second blade.

11. (Original) The device of claim 1 wherein the blades are made from a substantially rigid material.

12. (Currently Amended) A device for use in dressing a piece of shellfish, comprising:

a handle having first and second handle members, at least one of the handle members being manually movable with respect to the other between an open configuration in which the handle members are spaced apart from each other and a closed configuration in which at least a portion of the one of the handle members is positioned proximate a portion of the other; and

a working end having first and second arms, each arm having opposing proximal and distal ends and a central portion therebetween, the proximal ends of the arms being coupled to the first and second handle members, respectively, the distal ends of the arms terminating coincident with a terminal end of the device to facilitate insertion of the device into the piece of shellfish, and the first and second arms being coupled together at locations at least near the distal end of each of the arms; and wherein

the first and second arms are operable through manipulation of the handle members to move between an aligned configuration in which the first and second arms are at least substantially aligned with each other and the device can be inserted into the piece of shellfish, and a spread configuration in which the central portion of at least one of the arms is spaced apart from the central portion of the other arm.

13. (Original) The device of claim 12, further comprising a biasing member configured to urge the at least one of the first and second handle members into the open configuration.

14. (Original) The device of claim 12 wherein the first and second arms are coupled together at their extreme distal ends.

15. (Original) The device of claim 12 wherein the central portions of the first and second arms are located between the respective handle member and the locations where the arms are coupled together.

16. (Original) The device of claim 12 wherein the arms are in the aligned configuration when the handle members are in the open configuration and the arms are in the spread configuration when the handle members are in the closed configuration.

17. (Original) The device of claim 12 wherein at least one of the arms is bifurcated at a pivotal connection located at least near the central portion of the arm whereby the proximal portion of the arm can pivot with respect to the distal portion of the arm to move between the aligned and spread configurations.

18. (Original) The device of claim 12 wherein the first and second arms are bifurcated at a pivotal connection located at least near the central portion of the arms whereby the proximal portions of the arms can pivot with respect to the distal portions of the arms to move between the aligned and spread configurations, and wherein the first arm is configured to pivot in a direction opposite that of the second arm.

19. (Original) The device of claim 12 wherein the arms are made from a substantially rigid material.

20. (Currently Amended) A device for dressing a piece of shellfish, comprising:

a first blade having a length with proximal, distal and central portions, the first blade configured such that the central portion can move laterally with respect to both the proximal and distal portions, the distal end of the first blade being sized and shaped to facilitate its insertion into the piece of shellfish;

a second blade having a length with proximal, distal and central portions, the second blade configured such that the central portion can move laterally with respect to both the proximal and distal portions, the distal end of the second blade being sized and shaped to facilitate its insertion into the piece of shellfish; wherein

the proximal portions of the first and second blades are movably coupled to each other; and

an actuator coupled to the proximal ends of the first and second blades, the actuator being configured to selectively move the central portions of the first and second blades between an aligned configuration in which the first and second blades are at least substantially aligned with each other and the distal ends of the blades can be inserted into the piece of shellfish, and a spread configuration in which the central portion of the blades are spaced apart from each other.

21. (Original) The device of claim 20 wherein the actuator is manually operable to move the blades between the aligned and spread configurations.

22. (Currently Amended) A method for dressing a piece of shellfish to facilitate removing a shell therefrom, comprising:

inserting ~~an~~ at least two bars of a linkage having at least four interconnected bars into the piece of shellfish;

actuating the linkage to spread at least ~~one~~ two of the bars laterally apart from each other within the piece of shellfish until ~~it~~ at least one bar penetrates a shell; and

removing the linkage while the ~~at least one bar is~~ two bars are actuated to create a slit in the shell.

23. (Original) The method of claim 22 wherein the linkage is connected to a handle, and wherein actuating the linkage comprises manually manipulating the handle.

24. (Original) The method of claim 22 wherein the linkage is connected to a pair of opposing handle members, and wherein actuating the linkage comprises manually moving at least one of the handle members with respect to the other.

25. (Original) The method of claim 22 wherein the linkage is connected to a pair of opposing handle members, and wherein actuating the linkage comprises manually pivoting at least one of the handle members with respect to the other.

26. (Original) The method of claim 22 wherein the linkage is connected to a pair of opposing handle members, and wherein actuating the linkage comprises squeezing the handle members together.